Jesuit Relations, 1640 — “They Have Always Adored the One Who Made All Things”

Source: Relation de ce qui s’est passé en la Nouvelle-France, l’année 1640

Author: Jérôme Lalemant, S.J.

Issued: Paris, 1641

Translation: Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, Vol. 18 (Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., 1898)

> “These peoples have always adored the One who made all things.”
>
> When we speak with the Hurons and the Algonquins, they tell us that from their ancestors they received the belief that there is one who created the world and governs it still. They name Him Ioso ataro, that is, He who has made us. They do not deny His majesty; rather, they confess that the Sun and the Sky obey Him.
>
> They say that when they take their first game in the hunt, they give thanks to Him; when they are preserved in danger, they speak His name and offer the first fruits of the chase. They have no temples, for they hold that His dwelling is the Sky itself, and that to lift one’s eyes upward is to pray.
>
> When we teach them that this Maker sent His Son to earth to restore mankind, they are not surprised, saying: “It is fitting that He should remember His children.” Some have told me that in the ancient days their elders spoke of a man clothed in light who taught gentleness and forbade war; they call him the Sky-Born One.
>
> They have, then, a religion without knowledge of the Cross, and yet not without a sense of the true God. The task given to us is not to destroy what is there, but to perfect it; for the truth already lies beneath the bark of their belief, as fire hidden in wood.

(End of excerpt, Relation of 1640, Jérôme Lalemant, S.J.)

Archival Reference:

Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, Vol. 18, “Relation of 1640,” pp. 46–48. Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed. Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1898.

Summary:

In 1640 Father Lalemant recorded that the Huron and Algonquin nations already venerated “He who has made us,” offering thanks and prayers to the Creator long before hearing of Christ. He saw in their worship a natural revelation—a spark of divine truth awaiting completion through the Gospel.

Subject Tags:

- Jesuit Missions — New France — 17th Century
- Indigenous Theology — Concept of the Creator
- Catholic Church — Recognition of Natural Faith
- Huron and Algonquin Spiritual Traditions